

a major research conclusion in itself, since reconstructions of Hohokam prehistory dominant at the time that the project began posited environmental causality for a variety of shifts in settlement, social organization, economy, and material culture (for example, Doyel 1980). SGA set out to test the suppositions underlying that reconstruction of prehistory (Teague 1982), and made a major contribution in documenting the extent to which the Hohokam had the knowledge and the technology to adapt to the non-catastrophic kinds of environmental variability that they encountered in the Sonoran Desert.

Another assumption that was common among Hohokam archeologists as the project began was that the early Classic Period was characterized by a severe economic decline, probably precipitated by environmental problems (Doyel 1980). It also had been proposed that there was a “collapse” of the Hohokam regional system, represented by the ballcourt complex and accompanying belief system (Wilcox and Sternberg 1983). SGA did not find evidence of the proposed economic decline (Teague and Crown 1984). In the early Classic Period the Hohokam in the study area experienced stable or increasing economic interaction with those elsewhere at the same time that there was increased differentiation from those areas in styles of material culture, architecture, and ritual expression.

Social Organization and Economy

A major focus of SGA research was the internal organization of Hohokam communities.

The SGA project confirmed that the pre-Classic Hohokam were an essentially egalitarian people with little role specialization or difference in access to trade goods. There was high mobility, particularly during the pre-Classic periods, with many individuals and families spending portions of the year in fieldhouses, returning to villages during the remainder of their annual round. Those permanent villages might be on the rivers or on productive major washes like Queen Creek and Siphon Draw. However, participation in central community activities would have required association with a village having a ballcourt, and these were not present at Queen Creek. During the pre-Classic periods riverine and non-riverine settlements complemented one another as part of the flexible economic and social strategy of the Phoenix Basin Hohokam.

Shifts in the location of settlements at the time of the Sedentary-Classic Period transition had been documented for some time, beginning with the excavations at Los Muertos by the Hemenway Expedition in the 1880s (Haury 1945). Nonetheless, the process of change leading to this changed settlement structure had not been very thoroughly investigated. SGA provided an opportunity to excavate some of the smaller settlements on the rivers, documenting the persistence of Hohokam house-in-pit architecture into the Soho phase of the Classic Period (Shaw 1983). The evolution from houses in pits to the compound architecture of the Civano Phase was also traced on the Gila River near

The Central Arizona Project

In 1968, Congress authorized construction of the Central Arizona Project, or CAP, by the Bureau of Reclamation. The CAP consists of a 335-mile long aqueduct designed to carry 1.5 million acre-feet of water per year from the Colorado River to cities, farmlands, and Indian communities in central and southern Arizona.

Besides providing water, the CAP provided a unique opportunity to look into Arizona's past. As part of the project, the Bureau of Reclamation conducted one of the largest federal archaeology programs ever undertaken. Most of the CAP archaeological investigations have focused on the remnants of a people archeologists call “Hohokam.” Although they left no written records, archeologists have learned much about these people who lived from about 300 B.C. to about A.D. 1450 in the Salt and Gila river valleys near modern-day Phoenix.

CAP archeological studies have been performed by private groups, including universities, small businesses that specialize in archeological research, and most recently by a Native American tribal archeological program. Since the early 1970s over 5,500 archeological sites have been identified, and almost 600 of these have been excavated. The main stem of the CAP aqueduct is completed and carrying water; remaining to be completed are CAP systems on several Native American Indian communities.

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